

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
OCALA DIVISION

STEPHEN P. JONES,

Plaintiff,

v.

Case No. 5:20-cv-247-Oc-18NPM

COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL
SECURITY

Defendant.

ORDER

Before the Court is Defendant's Opposed Motion for Stay of Proceedings (Doc. 12). Plaintiff filed a response in opposition (Doc. 13). In this Social Security case, Defendant requests that the Court stay the proceedings for ninety days or until such time as the Agency regains capacity to produce a certified transcript of the administrative record necessary to draft an answer and adjudicate the case. (Doc. 12, p. 1). Due to the current situation in this country, Defendant represents the Agency has limited its employees' access to the Social Security Administration's ("SSA") facilities and some workloads are suspended until the health crisis abates. (*Id.*, p. 2). Specifically, the operations at SSA's Office of Appellate Operations has been significantly impacted. (*Id.*).

Plaintiff argues the motion should be denied or, alternatively, a stay of only thirty days should be granted. (Doc. 13, p. 2). Plaintiff argues no adequate justification has been offered for the requested delay.

A court has broad discretion whether to stay a proceeding "as an incident to its power to control its own docket." *Clinton v. Jones*, 520 U.S. 681, 706-707 (1997). The

court must weigh the benefits of the stay against any harms of delay. *Id.* at 707. Here, the Commissioner has provided good cause to extend the deadline to file the certified transcript and answer. But the Court finds that a ninety day extension would cause undue delay. The Court will extend the deadline to file the certified transcript and answer by sixty days.

The Court notes Plaintiff advances an impassioned plea to expedite the adjudication of Social Security disability appeals given the lengthy administrative process before reaching the District Court. The Court reminds Plaintiff that practitioners help the court serve this end by routinely consenting to the adjudication of these appeals by a United States Magistrate Judge, which streamlines court review and can thereby yield a final disposition months sooner.¹

Accordingly, it is **ORDERED**:

The Opposed Motion for Stay of Proceedings (Doc. 12) is **GRANTED in part and DENIED in part**. The Court extends the deadline for Defendant to file a certified transcript and answer to **October 13, 2020**.

DONE and **ORDERED** in Fort Myers, Florida on August 11, 2020.



NICHOLAS P. MIZELL
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

¹ To evince consent, the parties simply electronically sign and file the [AO Form 85](#), which is available on the Court's website.